



## An Overview of the Draft Yosemite Valley Plan

At the heart of planning for Yosemite Valley's future is preserving the integrity of its ecological communities along with the park's rich cultural and historical heritage. But of equal importance is providing a range of opportunities for visitors to learn about and enjoy Yosemite. The *Yosemite Valley Plan* is an implementation plan that aims to help carry out the goals of the 1980 *General Management Plan* to reclaim priceless natural beauty, reduce traffic congestion, allow natural processes to prevail, reduce crowding, and promote visitor understanding and enjoyment. Actions proposed under this plan provide for resource protection, restoration programs, visitor services and facilities, and park operations in Yosemite Valley. It also provides for the relocation of some facilities outside Yosemite Valley, and contains preliminary measures for managing vehicle traffic and congestion.



Photo by Michael Dixon

Understanding Yosemite's unique qualities makes the Valley planning process at times easy, and at other times very difficult. Your personal ability to enjoy the Valley's natural landscape and cultural values must be weighed against the need to preserve the place for others and for future generations. Achieving many ecosystem protection and restoration objectives could result in reduced visitor or administrative facilities and amenities, or changes in access. The National Park Service is confronting several thorny issues in the draft planning process:

### ACCOMMODATIONS

Visitors believe it is important to be able to spend the night in Yosemite Valley and a range of accommodations is needed. But trying to provide enough camping and lodging raises potential conflicts:

- Is it more important to allow camping and lodging right along the river, or restore environmentally significant riparian areas that they disrupt?
- Should the number of campsites and rooms be reduced to respect the constraints of floodplains, rockfall zones, and highly valued resources? Or should the same number be retained, but relocated?
- Given the severely limited land able to withstand development, what balance needs to be made when considering land for campsites, lodging facilities, employee housing, other visitor services, and facilities for operations?

### PARKING

Visitors need access to the park, but how? The *General Management Plan* called for a limited number of parking spaces for users, but didn't take into account the visitation growth that has taken place since 1980. The National Park Service needs to find places for cars to park so visitors can enjoy the Valley, while meeting the *General Management Plan* goals of reducing traffic congestion and crowding. Where to park cars raises several difficult questions:

- Should parking be consolidated and formalized or remain informal and decentralized?
- Is it more important to park cars along the meadows or to restore the meadows?
- Should all day visitors park in Yosemite Valley, or should out-of-Valley locations be considered?

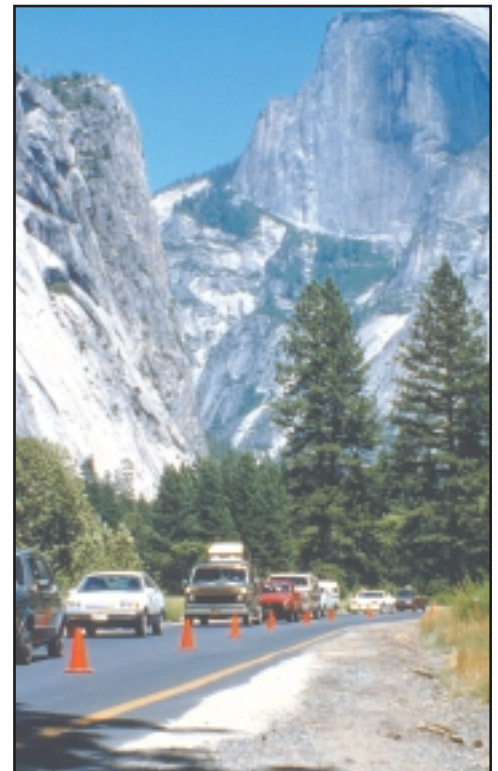


Photo by Michael Dixon

### LISTENING TO THE PUBLIC

Thousands of comments have expressed strong support for careful preservation of Yosemite's great natural and cultural resources. However, others voiced equally strong desires for high quality visitor services, accessibility, and a range of accommodations within the Valley. The flood of 1997 and several recent large rockslides have underscored that any adopted plan must also be cognizant of the ongoing role of natural processes. The alternatives presented in the *Draft Yosemite Valley Plan* are sure to generate more discussion as the range of options is considered.

